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ADDING PAID LINKS TO MEDIA CAPTIONS IN A SOCIAL NETWORKING SYSTEM

BACKGROUND

This disclosure relates generally to posted media in social networking systems, and in particular to adding paid links to media captions in a social networking system.

Social networking systems allow users to share content with other users. Some social networking systems enable users to share media content in particular, such as images and videos. When sharing media content, it is often useful for users to add annotations to explain or describe the content item. Thus, social networking systems may enable users to add captions or other types of annotations to images or videos that the users post to the system. Typically, social networking systems do not restrict the content that users can add to captions: while the social networking system may limit the format of the content to text and may limit the amount of text users can enter, the users may be able to enter any desired text with few, if any, other restrictions. In some cases, users may enter link text, such as a uniform resource locator or another type of address specifying a digital location, to direct other users of the social networking system to an external location, such as the user's personal web page. However, freely allowing users to enter link text and generate a corresponding link may result in undesirable captions or promotion of links for a user that are not of interest to other users, and may risk spamming other users with undesirable links. Directing users to web pages or applications outside of the social networking system also reducing user engagement with the social networking system.

SUMMARY

An online system, such as a social networking system, enables users to post media content for display to other users of the system. The media content, which includes, for example, images or videos, is posted to the online system by a posting user and is associated with a caption. The caption includes text content, and may explain or describe the media content. The online system analyzes the text content posted with the media content, and if the online system detects the text content of the caption includes link text, such as a URL, the online system prompts the posting user to pay a fee for generating a link based on the link text. Because such links may provide an alternate method for advertising other than normal advertising channels of the online system, for which the advertiser would normally pay, the fee prevents an advertiser from posting content with a link in the caption as an alternate advertising method without cost to the advertiser, and prevents excessive links by other users of the online system. The fee for generating a link may be a flat fee, or may vary based on a number of other users that are connected to the posting user via the online system, a number of other users that viewed one or more media content items previously posted to the online system by the posting user, or a frequency at which the posting user posts media content to the online system.

The fee may alternatively be based at least in part on the user profile of the user. For example, the online system may charge an entity, such as a business, a fee to generate a link, but may not charge an individual user a fee. When the fee is varied, it may promote the posting of such links by a user with a smaller following, but encourage users with larger followings to use a normal advertising channel for the social

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online system rather than posting links to a caption of an image. The fee may be small enough to not discourage users from occasionally posting links with their media content, but large enough to disincentivize users from generating links on a mass scale. If the posting user pays the fee or if the online system determines to not charge the posting user a fee, the online system generates the link within the caption. The generated link is a selectable object that, when selected on a user client device, causes the client device to access content associated with the link (e.g., a web page). If the posting user does not pay the fee, the online system may display the link text within the caption, but not as a selectable object or remove the link text entirely. The media content and caption, with or without the link, are displayed to one or more other users of the online system.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a block diagram of a system environment in which an online system operates, in accordance with one embodiment.

FIG. 2 is a block diagram of an online system, in accordance with one embodiment.

FIGS. 3A-3D illustrate an example posting flow for posting a media content item to the online system, in accordance with one embodiment.

FIG. 4 is a flowchart illustrating a process for generating links within media content captions in an online system, in accordance with one embodiment.

The figures depict various embodiments of the present invention for purposes of illustration only. One skilled in the art will readily recognize from the following discussion that alternative embodiments of the structures and methods illustrated herein may be employed without departing from the principles of the invention described herein.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Overview

An online system facilitates user sharing of media content such as images and videos. Users of the online system post media content to the online system with an associated caption describing the item, and the online system displays the content and the caption to other users of the system. To reduce the likelihood of users spamming other users of the system and to keep users engaged with the online system, the online system typically disallows users from adding links to the captions. When the online system detects addition of a link to a caption, the online system permits users to add links to the caption for a fee. When the online system detects that a user has entered link text into an image or video caption, the user is prompted to pay the fee. The online system generates the link corresponding to the link text if the user pays the fee, and disables the link if the user does not pay the fee.

System Architecture

FIG. 1 is a high level block diagram of a system environment 100 for an online system 140. The system environment 100 shown by FIG. 1 comprises one or more client devices 110, a network 120, one or more third-party systems 130, and the online system 140. In alternative configurations, different and/or additional components may be included in the system environment 100. The embodiments are describe herein with respect to an online system with social networking system functionality, but can be adapted to online systems that are not social networking systems.